

# County, union reach deal

Lake commissioners, workers agree to 1-year contract including wage freeze, 8 furlough days

John Arthur Hutchison  
JHutchison@News-Herald.com

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Lake County commissioners' and about 84 union employees of the Communications Workers of America, Local 4340, agreed to a one-year contract Thursday that includes a wage freeze and eight furlough days.

The employees fall within the

commissioners' office's umbrella and involve people who work for Buildings and Grounds, Telecommunications, the Dog Warden, clerical staff, mailroom and building department, said Erica Seibert, the

union's chief steward.

"On the union's behalf we do understand the economic situation and the county is suffering, it's everybody's pocketbooks," Seibert said.

"We were glad we were able to do something."

Typically, the contracts with this union group are for three years. Both sides agreed to a one-year deal because of uncertainty involving a possible referendum of Senate Bill 5, the new state law that affects collective bargaining with public employees.

The contract is effective retroac-

tively to April 1 and expires March 31, 2012.

"The union and the commissioners recognize we don't know what will happen with Senate Bill 5 and there are a lot of changes in there that affect collective bargaining," said Bill Margalis, the county's director of administrative services.

"Our view is we didn't want to  
**See Deal, Page A6**

## Deal

From Page A1

hamper the ability to negotiate some of those changes."

The contract was negotiated by Margalis and Budget Director Michael T. Matas rather than an outside consultant.

Margalis said the county has trimmed down the number of those who are employed in the departments within this bargaining unit.

Seibert said four employees in the union have been laid off this year.

"Back in 2002, our bargaining unit had 117 members in

commissioners' bargaining unit, today it's 84," Margalis said.

"That's a considerable amount that has decreased during the years."

He also said five of those positions were eliminated after commissioners closed the County Home a few years ago.

"We've been reducing over the years, and certainly we thank the union for understanding that and understanding our position financially," Margalis said.

Commissioner Daniel P. Troy said it is unfortunate that employees need to take furlough days and have their

wages frozen, but he hopes things will get better.

"When other folks throughout the county family are saying my department is making all the sacrifices, this is an example of it starting right here at the top," Troy said.

Commissioners Robert E. Aufuldish and Raymond E. Sines thanked the bargaining unit for agreeing to the contract.

"This a family and we're all in this trying to do our best in a bad situation, and we want to move forward in a positive way and we thank you for your efforts and hopefully things will get better," Sines said.